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Many large cities across the nation have concentrated areas of families whose children are severely hampered in their schooling by a combination of community, home, and school conditions. In order to alleviate some of the problems, the Detroit Project has developed and tested a five-part program. Part one is concerned with teacher orientation and training through workshops and the distribution of a monthly paper to staff members. Part two involves the improved use of instructional material and equipment and the development of materials adapted to the needs of the culturally deprived child. Part three involves the modification of organizational patterns within the schools to produce more flexibility in programming (i.e. block-time programming, pre-school programs for young children, bus trips, and camping experiences). Part four deals with the assignment of extra personnel to each school such as coaching teachers, visiting teachers, and the school-community agent. Part five concerns the involvement of public and private agencies and the development of school-home-community reinforcement activities. Need for changes in the urban schools are recognized, since previous unrealistic and ineffective schooling has left far too many children with lives that offer little scope and meaning. Schools must give children access to economic, social and ethical adjustment and development.

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THE CULTURALLY DEPRIVED--A MATTER OF CONCERN

by

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THE CULTURALLY DEPRIVED--A MATTER OF CONCERN

Detroit, February 9, 1962
The Great Cities School Improvement Project
Staff Writer: Charles Mitchell

Five years ago, in Atlantic City, superintendents and board members of fourteen large-city (600,000 plus) school systems* met and concluded that immediate steps should be taken to find ways to improve the education of culturally deprived city children. From this beginning has grown a now-nationwide educational experiment called the Great Cities School Improvement Project.

In Detroit and other large cities across the nation are concentrated families whose children are severely hampered in their schooling by a complex of community, home, and school conditions. To engage the total problem faced by urban educators, we shall make a brief foray into the social pathology which produced it.

Change in the population of the inner cores of most large cities has created areas where the majority of children have extraordinary needs which the public schools are not prepared to meet. Where once the inner city population was typically "all kinds," it has now become typically stratified. The majority of upper and middle income urbanites have removed to the suburbs or to the outer rings of the city. The population that remains is predominantly unskilled or semi-skilled low income racial and ethnic minorities. When

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* Baltimore, Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, St. Louis, and Washington.

representatives of other strata moved out, the vacuum was filled by Southern Appalachian white and southern Negro in-migrants similar in many ways to the low-income minority groups that had remained in the inner city.

Many of the city's manufacturing and service industries have followed the upper and middle income exodus and proliferated outward. What remains is the glowing downtown section, a great multi-story civic and merchandising complex, serviced by expressways and surrounded by mile upon mile of slums and "transitional" or "gray" areas, still containing a few pockets of more affluent residential areas and high rent apartment districts.

From these slums and transitional areas come more than one-third of the 3,200,000 children now enrolled in America's fourteen largest school systems. Many of them are culturally deprived, and most of them are concentrated in the inner city schools.

This term "culturally deprived;" what does it mean? To the hard-phrasers, it means "slum child from a slum neighborhood," and educators have been accused of veiling both child and difficulty in the evasive euphemism of "culturally deprived," and "transitonal neighborhood." In fact, to translate the whole problem into "slum child from a slum neighborhood" is not valid. Slum children are not necessarily culturally deprived, and vice versa. The term is too cut and dried, and we cannot be content to use it as a label. Children and their families resist such labeling. That is why we have accepted culturally deprived as a useful, relatively objective term to apply to the child who lacks enough of the opportunities and advantages normally available to most American children, and is therefore unable to make satisfactory progress in a typical school.

3-3-3-3-3
Detroit GCSIP
Mitchell

In Detroit, the Great Cities Project is working through seven schools*, involving 420 school personnel and 10,400 children and their families. The project budget is composed in part of Board of Education funds, and in part of funds from The Ford Foundation.

The families of these children live for the most part in low-cost public housing, or in actual slums--overcrowded, substandard-multiple dwellings of overy type--or in single and two family homes in neighborhoods which are, in reality, transitional.**

The families of these children may have resided in Detroit for many years, but most came during and immediately after the Second World War to fill industry's needs for unskilled labor, or are very recent in-migrants from rural areas, particularly rural areas of the Southern states, who shifted from a land of no current or foreseeable opportunity to a land of possible--maybe--opportunity.

Most in-migrants to Detroit are unskilled or semi-skilled. They and their families must usually adjust to city life without the benefit of steady income and without previous experience in seeking help from private and public community

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* Burton Elementary, Couzens Elementary, Franklin Elementary, Marcy Elementary, Barbour Junior High School, Jefferson Junior High School and Eastern High School.

** At a glance, these homes seem quite substantial. They were viewed as such by a writer at work on an article about the Great Cities Project, who visited a project junior high school and its neighborhood and commented wryly: "So this is a slum? Wish we had it so good in New York." The School-Community Agent, one of the extra personnel hired by the project to do community organization and social work for the school, suggested that the writer might visit some of the homes and see what sad situations exist behind their still-neat facades. The neighborhood is not yet a slum, physically, but its people are in difficult straits, and the children reflect this in school.

services. The proudly independent Southern Appalachian white finds rabbit-barren city life difficult, and as a non-joiner is not inclined to turn to anyone but his family and friends for help. His southern Negro counterpart has a different sense of things and is more likely to seek and find help, though his adjustment to city life is just as arduous and requires as much or more perserverence as that of the Southern white.

These in-migrants come into a portion of the total community which is fragmented and uncohesive, lacks trained leadership and organization, and physically reflects the low, inconsistent income and the lack of information and skills of its inhabitants. Here, whatever booms or economic upturns may occur in other places, depression never ceases. A job is a will-o-the-wisp.

The culturally deprived child's family may have many meritable standards and values. Even when its material well-being is limited to basic necessities, the family may be close-knit with love and caring. Often it is a family remnant, usually a matriarchy with the father unknown or gone off somewhere. Sometimes it is barely self-sufficient, and sometimes, especially in the case of matriarchies, it depends entirely upon Aid to Dependent Children or other supporting agencies for the means to live. In any case, there is a common denominator: not enough. Not enough income, information, skills to get along successfully: no precedent for success: insufficiencies of every sort.

Consider a typical in-migrant family from the Southern Appalachians. Rurally oriented, they worked a marginal farm, but gave it up. As "on the back movers," they arrived in Detroit sans furniture and appliances, with what they could carry, and set up housekeeping in a small "apartment." The father could find no job, but the mother could and did. She is a waitress. Suddenly the father's traditional role as stern patriarch and family head is placed in question.

5-5-5-5-5
Detroit GCSIP
Mitchell

The mother is now the breadwinner. The father sits at home or otherwise occupies his time. As part of a family work force, the children once had chores--chores which kept them out of school for much of the year. There are no chores now; there is only school, and the strange freedom of the streets. These children are poorly prepared and poorly motivated for school. School has never seemed important to them.

Obviously there are some tremendous adjustments to be made, and little experience or precedent or information to base them upon. Obviously there are going to be some tragic failures. With a sufficiency of income, information, motivation, and time--in short, in an ideal situation--urban life adjustment might evolve quite pleasantly. But the situation is poor, and many children have little to do except, as one visiting teacher's report put it, "think about the hills of home, go to school each day unprepared and purposeless, and be 'sick to mah stomach from the gas stove' (quote from child) that heats a three-room flat."

The parents of the culturally deprived child are not against education. At worst they see no need for it, are indifferent. Many have hopes and ambitions for their children which involve getting a good education. They are glad if their child does well in school, but they have little formal education themselves, know little about studies or how children learn. They feel that they cannot, in their lack of success, understand how to help the child succeed. Most parents surely care, care a great deal, but care without knowledge is often sad and misguided, and sometimes teams with acute parental shame at child failure or misdemeanor in school, and becomes unjustified and unsuccessful corporal punishment.

6-6-6-6-6
Detroit GCSIP
Mitchell

The total picture--family, community, urban adjustment, employment opportunity--has by necessity become a matter of concern to urban educators. The culturally deprived child often has ability levels which indicate that he could achieve well, could grow up in school studies and in his life if reached and interested by what the school offered. And yet the typical culturally deprived child in the typical classroom is indifferent and purposeless, a poor communicator who does not respond to normal teaching methods and subject matter. His capabilities remain unrealized.

Why?

The traditional responsibilities of school staff and objectives of school services are based upon a uniform "Successful American" social and economic pattern and do not obtain effectively to the non-uniform social and economic patterns which characterize the neighborhoods from which these children come.

The typical school cannot compensate for the various lacks in the lives of culturally deprived children. The typical school is not structured or oriented to provide those reinforcements to school learning which, in a stable, middle-income area, are normally provided each child by his home and out-of-school life.

Many of these reinforcements are intangible. They include: an acceptable self-image*; knowledge of essentials such as nutrition and health; an implicit sense of identification with a stable family in a stable neighborhood; security and freedom from want, both material and emotional; the self-confidence and

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*"self-image" is a moot term: here it is used to delineate the child's conscious and sub-conscious feelings about himself insofar as they delimit his motivation, aspiration, and success in school. Is he inured to failure, failure prone? Or does he think he can do what he wants to do?

motivation to achieve which rub off on the child who is surrounded by things and involved in experiences which are accepted both at home and in school either as symbols of success or significant achievements.

Such positive factors are essential in some form in the growing up of a child. They are the firm ground beneath the learning process. If they are insufficient or lacking, and no compensation is made for them, then the child's ability to learn is impeded or lost. He must have them, if he is to do well in the typical school.

It seems reasonable that the educator should be concerned with all that affects the child he is trying to educate, and in fact teachers and administrators often informally cross traditional lines and do "unorthodox" things to help children who are not doing well in school. But except through the truant or attendance officer, the public schools, especially the urban public schools, seldom make official organized attempts to alter the "other lives" of children. And yet experience in educating culturally deprived children has shown that investment of funds and energy by a traditional one-sided approach often proves futile in achieving the public schools' stated purpose—in developing self-reliant, productive, and discriminating citizens.

It might be said that two of the three forces which normally shape a child's character and provide him with the means he needs to grow up and live successfully have an overall neutral or negative effect on the child. If the family (and in family I include personal affiliation with a church) does little to help prepare the child for life, and the cultural environment of the child is

limited and negative, then the one force left to do the necessary shaping is the school. It must provide more for the child than it normally would, at the same time attempting, with other community services, to revive the family's positive influence and to introduce portions of our culture and our society which tend to equalize the child's limited and negative environment. If each child is to learn as much as he is able, the Great Cities must provide an effective, economical school program prepared to reinforce the "complete life" of a child if such reinforcement is needed.

The Detroit Great Cities Project is developing and testing a five-part program. Part number one is concerned with teacher orientation and training. Since improvement of schooling depends upon more effective teaching, we have developed in-service training programs designed to modify the perception of teachers as this perception relates to the culturally deprived child, his neighborhood, and his schooling. And since most teachers bring to their work an experiential background entirely different than that of the families whose children they teach, appropriate changes in teacher perception must occur to insure reasonably objective reactions to child, family, and neighborhood.

These important changes in the perception of teachers occur only as teachers become aware of and involved in the processes of change which confront children and their families day by day.

The workshop is an effective-in-service training tool for providing teachers with useful knowledge to apply in teaching the culturally deprived child. The Detroit project has used it: to outline the extraordinary needs of the culturally deprived child, with outstanding consultants in child psychology, sociology,

urban renewal, in-migration, and so forth; to involve parents in studies of curriculum; and to plan curriculum, courses for parents, pre-school programs, summer school programs, and family nights.

A monthly paper, the GCSIP Footnotes, is distributed to all staffmembers in the seven project schools. Its purpose is to keep staff abreast of events and changes in other schools, and to disseminate articles and materials pertinent to a greater understanding of the culturally deprived child's world.

Part number two involves the improved use of instructional equipment and materials and the development of educational materials adapted to the needs of the culturally deprived child. One of the difficulties of teaching reading in the primary grades has been to find a primer series which contains words and experiences which the culturally deprived child can relate to things in his own life.

A committee of reading specialists, together with citizen's and teacher's advisory committees, is working in cooperation with the Follett Publishing Company on a three primer series which may prove to be a radical departure from the standard materials of this genre. In the series, situations and events common to the inner city child's experience are used. Vocabulary familiar to him is presented--although usage is different than his might be. Streets are crowded city streets, houses are old (but well-kept) city houses. Fathers do not all wear ties and carry briefcases. And some of the faces of the children in the stories are brown, and some are white—an unprecedented realistic touch. This more than anything else in the new series may help numerous children to take new interest in learning the words in their primers.

To encourage a home library (in the homes of these children are few books or magazines), books are purchased on consignment and sold at cost to children and parents. Largely paperbacks, they range from classics in literature to fairy tales, simple nursery stories, and appropriate adventure stories.

Three hundred fifty to four hundred dollars has been added to each school's funds to allow teachers to obtain materials which they deem useful, but which are not available through regular procurement channels.

Teachers are encouraged to search out and recommend effective instructional materials. One social studies teacher (junior high school) had difficulty finding materials which his students cared to read (the class was low track in a multiple track program). He is a competent writer, and simply constructed short stories which projected each student from current time into the future, with intriguing speculations, all logical, on the individual as he would be, and the nature of tomorrow's society and technology. The students read avidly.

Extensive curriculum change, a very involved and controversial process, is in the discussion-recommendations stage, but as yet actual changes have been minor.

Part number three concerns modification of organizational patterns within the school for more flexible and efficient programming to meet individual needs. Team teaching is being tried in three schools with considerable success, and has been temporarily abandoned in one school because of limited facilities.

Block-time programming, using study units developed by teachers, has been initiated in the two junior high schools. A non-graded primary unit has been

in operation in the one school for two years, and testing of child progress shows highly satisfactory results. Another school instituted a non-graded primary, in September, 1961, and has extended teacher-pupil continuity to six semesters with many of its elementary class groups.

A pre-school program, begun in one school to discover whether early preparation could offset some of the lacks of the culturally deprived child, now has "graduates" in the primary grades who are, in most cases, well ahead of peers who had no pre-school experience. Whether that headstart will be retained or lost along the way remains to be seen.

One of the most obvious, and perhaps most successful ways to enrich and expand the background of the child is to put him on a bus and take him to places he has never seen and perhaps never heard of. Such mobile instruction is fortified by extensive classroom preparation before, and used as the basis of classwork after. Approximately 400 bus trips to industry, business and cultural centers were provided the seven schools in 1960-61 (this figure includes trips as part of summer programs--GCP schools operate the year round.) In addition, there are walking trips to the fire department, the service station, the supermarket, and trips by private car for smaller groups and clubs.

Camping experiences are an expanding activity in the project schools. There are numerous reasons for sending the culturally deprived child off to the woods for a week. Here are three: a camp experience provides an entirely new dimension to a city-oriented life; it offers unique opportunities to teach and learn, especially in the sciences; and it provides an opportunity for teachers and pupils to begin to know and understand each other as people. Since the

teacher is often the only available source of the sort of objective affection and acceptance which the child needs most, a camping experience may be the keystone upon which a child's success in school can be built. There are other assets; one is the chance to enjoy the public lands a citizen is free to use, and to learn some things about the citizen's responsibility for these lands.

Besides, it is new fun to catch a click beetle or a bluegill, and to sit around on the grass under a tree and talk to a teacher.

For the three camp experiences (two in the spring and one in the winter, involving approximately 200 sixth-and seventh-graders and fifty staff), students prepared extensively in class, parents were informed and included in preparation and planning. To "earn their way," the children, with supervision from school staff and parents, washed cars, mowed lawns, sold cakes and cookies and Christmas trees (after a day of cutting and hauling their trees from tree farm to city).

Area number four concerns the extra personnel assigned to each school, to help classroom teachers and school administrators coordinate home-community, agency, and school resources, and increase remedial teaching and referral capacity.

Coaching teachers (one per school) have enhanced the work of regular teachers by doing extensive diagnostic and developmental work in language arts and arithmetic with approximately 350 children whose disabilities required extensive remedial instruction. It is interesting that these specialists often find that their first task is to develop confidence and motivation in children who have not learned, children to whom schoolwork of any kind has been synonomous with defeat and failure.

13-13-13-13-13
Detroit GCSIP
Mitchell

Full-time visiting teachers (school social workers, one per school) diagnose and refer emotionally disturbed children and their families to appropriate agencies and specialists for help. In many cases our visiting teachers find they must do much of the helping themselves, since they are often accepted as part of the family, and because, as one parent put it, "I can't talk about this to a stranger."

The school-community agent (one in each elementary school, two in each of the junior and senior high schools) is essentially a social worker trained in community organization. The agent is responsible for implementing the ideal of the community or neighborhood school, serving children, parents, and interested neighbors alike. To this end agents utilize staff and laymen as volunteer and paid after-school and evening instructors and leaders, work with staff in developing a comprehensive enrichment-remedial-recreational summer program, coordinate the work of community agencies in the school, and develop and renew in appropriate ways community leadership and interest in and use of the school. Informally, the agent is an impartial arbiter of school-family issues, the go-between and open forum for neighborhood opinion.

Part number five concerns Public and private agency involvement and the development of school-home-community reinforcement activities. The success of a community-school venture in a culturally deprived area depends in large measure on the concentration of Public and Private agency resources and personnel on community-school needs.

14-14-14-14-14
Detroit GCSIP
Mitchell

Activities in 1960-61 included:

— a day camp for 55 emotionally disturbed children from project schools (with the Neighborhood Service Organization)

— extensive use of YMCA and YWCA facilities and programs

— shared use of recreation facilities and personnel with Detroit Department of Parks and Recreation

— expanded use of public libraries transporting parents and children by shuttle and car, and sending Detroit Public Library Bookmobiles out into the project neighborhoods

— cooperation with the Detroit Department of Health and the Pilot Club of Detroit, to staff and operate a clinic which will do a complete inventory of physical-nutritional needs of one school's population

— work with the Detroit Commission on Children and Youth in the compilation of a crime and delinquency report in project school areas

— extended contacts with neighborhood churches and use of school facilities for non-religious youth activities conducted by the churches

— use of nearly 200 high school and college students as teachers assistants and club leaders.

— Project staff involvement in committees and planning groups for urban renewal settlement house work, neighborhood conservation and other community service activities vital to the Great Cities Project.

— Project staff speeches on school needs and the culturally deprived child to 120 professional and lay groups in and around Detroit.

Schools are perhaps the most logical facility in which the total community can and should be involved. Reinforcement of pupil growth much like that found in a middle-income community is made possible through extensive-intensive involvement of everyone who can, will, or should be involved—parents, volunteer and paid staff, public and private agencies, city college and university students and professors, business concerns, and interested laymen.

15-15-15-15-15
Detroit GCSIP
Mitchell

When parents are invited to join staff in curriculum planning and development, aspirations for themselves and their children may be significantly changed. In addition, approximately 250 short and long-term after-school and evening classes for youth and adults took place in the project schools in 1960 and 1961. The courses were meant to be 1.) immediately useful (nutrition and health, preadolescent psychology, how to help your child graduate from high school, millinery, tailoring, carpentry and home repair,) 2.) possibly of use in gainful employment (typing and clerical work, hair styling) and 3.) for pleasure and enrichment (current events, square dancing and latin dancing, travel to far-away places, public speaking and dramatics, cake decorating, Swedish weaving). Adult and youth classes are reinforced by family night programs, recreational activities (gymnasium) clubs, scouting and urban 4-H, and a cooperative nursery program.

In all programs, formal and informal, school-family contact, keeping the lines of communication open, has helped children to be more effective learners and given parents the positive ability to urge their children to see reasons for learning and to make the most of their years in school.

The Project staff is relating all of its findings, after thorough evaluation, to the areas of teacher training and administrative organization, and expects to leave educators with valuable data concerning, not only effective teaching situations, but also effective teaching styles, administrative styles, and organizational structures.

The Detroit Project is unique in that it has a full-time evaluator assigned to the staff. In initiating the project in Detroit, it was recognized that

programs with proven effect should be continued and extended to schools currently uninvolved in the project—with the stipulation that an expanded program could not exceed an annual ten per cent per project student cost increase. Not every part of the project program will remain in use. To meet cost limits, Project staff must analyze statistics and data computed and filed during the five-year run, and use their findings to establish a priority list, top-rating the elements of the Project program which had the most significant effect in increasing school success of the culturally deprived child. Recommendations from this priority list will become the program used in extended project activities.

All evaluation falls into one of two dimensions. The first is the educational record dimension, based upon a battery of tests measuring change in academic achievement and ability and, to some extent, attitude toward school. Increased test performance indicates application in studies and (probably) a better attitude toward school.

The second dimension is that of sociological measurement and research. Sophisticated instruments have been developed and used to assess the attitudes and perception of teachers, impact of attitudes and perception on teaching style, and effect of teaching style on the school success of the culturally deprived child. Project staff is at work in collaboration with the School of Social Work, at the University of Michigan, to develop testing instruments, to study family types and neighborhood structure, and to analyze administrative style and its effect upon the liberal-innovative quality so essential in the style of a good teacher.

What are the "short term" forecasts for the Great Cities Project in Detroit? It is believed that a considerably larger number of children attending project

schools will leave them with positive self-images, higher goals, greater scholastic achievement and improved citizenship, more adequately prepared for continuing school or going to work.

It should be stressed that the Detroit Great Cities Project is not unique in its premises or in its purposes. Individual teachers and schools in Detroit and across the nation are striving to meet the needs of culturally deprived children. With little organized help, no extra funds, their work has been done with dedication and the old hard measure of blood, sweat, and tears. Such efforts are inspirational, but they are a stopgap, and we cannot hope that they will resolve a dilemma which has grown to such proportions that it can be met only with concerted, total-community effort.

Perhaps the most significant thing about the Detroit Great Cities Project, and similar projects in many great cities, is that it stands as a statement of need, as a formal attempt on the part of a Board of Education to establish a structure which has the funds, the personnel and the support to do a thorough job of proving that all children, no matter how difficult their situation may be, can be well-educated and positively motivated.

In Slums and Suburbs, Dr. James B. Conant observed a situation prevalent in our large cities which he succinctly called "social dynamite"--the hundreds of thousands of youth 16-20 who are out of school and out of work. In the majority of cases these youth, dropouts and graduates alike, are the products of schools unsuccessful in providing the academic and vocational skills needed, ineffective in encouraging young men and women to focus their potential on some purpose in life.

The fact that there are few unskilled or semi-skilled jobs available, and that they often go to the "upper track" candidates who are comfortably similar racially and socially to the employer bespeaks need for change in employment opportunity and hiring practices. But it should not serve as an excuse used to palliate the crucial need for change in our urban schools, or to condone the traditional silence of the schools on controversial social issues which relate directly to student success in schools. Unrealistic and ineffective schooling has left far too many youth with lives that, temporarily and perhaps permanently, offer little scope and little meaning. For the individual, this situation is frustrating and disillusioning. For society, it is a sad waste of human resources.

In spite of barriers, schools must give children access to economic, social, and ethical adjustment and development. In spite of barriers, schools must give youth the means to achieve goals. The Detroit Great Cities Project attempts to provide the special instruction and guidance and good teaching needed, when it is needed, using every means to encourage each child to learn.

This we believe, is good education in practice.